United Nations S/2007/360

Security Council

Distr.: General
1 June 2007

Original: English

Letter dated 23 May 2007 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you the final document of the United Nations African meeting on the question of Palestine, which was held in Pretoria on 9 and 10 May 2007 under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dumisani S. **Kumalo**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Republic of South Africa

07-38513 (E) 200607

Annex to the letter dated 23 May 2007 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English and French]

United Nations African meeting on the question of Palestine

FINAL DOCUMENT

1. The **United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine** was held in Pretoria, on 9 and 10 May 2007, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Participants in the Meeting included internationally renowned experts, including Israelis and Palestinians, representatives of United Nations Members and Observers, parliamentarians, representatives of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, representatives of civil society and the media. The theme of the Meeting was *"African solidarity with the Palestinian people for the achievement of its inalienable rights"*.

2. The objective of the Meeting, taking place against the background of renewed regional and international efforts at restarting the Israeli-Palestinian political process, was to encourage broad international action, especially by African States, in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and in support of achieving a solution to the conflict based on an internationally endorsed vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within pre-1967 borders. The Meeting took stock of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and looked from the African perspective into ways of consolidating and synergizing current international peace efforts. The Meeting also considered how African States could effectively contribute to these efforts through their action in national and intergovernmental, both regional and international, mechanisms, noting long-standing African solidarity with the Palestinian people's aspirations for self-determination, independence and statehood.

3. The participants welcomed the many points of principle and practical suggestions contained in the statement delivered in the opening session by H.E. Mr. Essop Pahad, Minister in the Office of the President of the Republic of South Africa.

4. The participants were encouraged by recent positive political developments. They noted, in particular, the formation of the new Palestinian National Unity Government, based on the Mecca Agreement and National Reconciliation Document, regular meetings that had started taking place between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert; the reaffirmation of the Arab Peace Initiative by the League of Arab States at the Riyadh Summit and its decision to establish working groups tasked

with engaging international partners in this regard; and efforts of the Quartet to broaden the scope of its work by engaging regional actors.

5. The participants expressed great concern at the continuing deterioration of the economic and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This crisis, in their view, was a direct consequence of the continuing occupation, further compounded by the withholding of direct donor assistance to the Palestinian Authority. While observing the positive effect produced by the introduction of the Temporary International Mechanism, the participants felt that it was neither commensurate with the Palestinian development requirements, nor sufficient to address current humanitarian emergency needs. They deplored also that much of the Palestinian budgetary shortfall was caused by Israel's illegal withholding of the customs and tax revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority and called on the Government of Israel to immediately and unconditionally release to the Palestinian Authority the remaining funds and resume regular monthly payments in accordance with bilateral agreements. The participants called on the United Nations and international community to recognize the National Unity Government of the Palestinian Authority and immediately lift the embargo against the Palestinian people.

6. Participants noted with deep concern the bleak account of the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory presented by the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip recently prepared by the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization, as well as the report submitted by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict following her recent visit to the region. They also took note of the latest report by Professor John Dugard, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, detailing the systematic human rights abuses and discriminatory practices committed against the Palestinian people and accusing Israel of violating the most fundamental rules of international humanitarian law, which constitute war crimes in terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions.

7. The participants were highly critical of Israel's routinely disproportionate and indiscriminate military operations in Palestinian population centres. In this regard, they reminded Israel, the occupying Power, of its responsibilities and accountability under international law. The participants noted that significant Israeli settlement activity continued across the entire occupied West Bank and in and around occupied East Jerusalem, in violation of the Road Map provisions calling for settlement freeze and dismantlement of settlement outposts. They further noted that construction of the wall inside the West Bank continued at accelerated pace in complete disregard of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion and relevant United Nations resolutions. They called upon all Governments, intergovernmental organizations and others to meet their legal obligations faced with Israel's non-compliance, and take appropriate actions.

8. While noting with grave concern the disturbing security situation on the ground, the participants expressed support for the President of the Palestinian Authority and his new Palestinian Government in the effort at restoring law and order under the difficult conditions of continuing occupation. They called for upholding the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and its extension to the West Bank.

9. The participants whole-heartedly welcomed increased international efforts to achieve a viable peace between Israel and Palestine, seeing in these efforts the renewed determination of the world community to bring to a close this decades-old conflict. They were, however, less optimistic as regards the pace and effectiveness of this international engagement. It was successful, in their view, in generating a global consensus on both the necessity of achieving a permanent settlement and on the shape that such a settlement should take. However, it was seen as much less successful when it came to restarting a meaningful political process for realizing this consensus. The participants also discussed the role and *modus operandi* of the Quartet, the special role of the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly and the International Conference suggestion.

10. The participants expressed the view that an independent State of Palestine could benefit from the experience of African States in their quest for decolonization, independence, sovereignty and ending Apartheid, as well as the experience of Africa on the path to economic independence and sustainable development. They further stressed the important role played by African States in wider efforts aimed at the resumption of the political process and the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, the participants called for enhancing Africa's contribution to the Middle East peace process and encouraged increased African action in regional and international forums. The role of the African Group at the United Nations, especially in the Security Council and General Assembly, was accorded special attention, as did the role of African parliaments and parliamentarians and, in particular, the role of the Pan-African Parliament in supporting a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

11. The participants reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to all aspects of the question of Palestine and singled out the special role of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. They extended special thanks to the United Nations staff who worked under increasingly difficult and often dangerous conditions on the ground, and called on all concerned to respect their special status.

12. The participants expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the Government of the Republic of South Africa for hosting the United Nations African Meeting on the Question of Palestine and for the assistance and support extended to the Committee and the United Nations Secretariat in its preparation.